

When traditions become innovations and innovations become traditions in everyday food pedagogies

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This paper explores the way learning to cook remains important for the maintenance of 'ethnic' food traditions and how sharing food knowledge plays a role in intercultural exchanges. Ethnographic data from an ongoing study in Melbourne is presented to highlight how, in everyday practices, both tradition and innovation are involved in learning experiences related to cooking. Using an everyday multiculturalism perspective, the study was designed to investigate the resilience of ethnic food cultures in the face of increasing industrialisation in global food systems. In this paper, I focus in particular on the interplay between tradition and innovation in everyday settings by drawing closely on three women's accounts of cooking and learning.

The women remain attached to the food traditions they learned by observing and taking part in daily routines of meal preparation

and they stress that many of these practices need to be preserved. At the same time, their accounts reveal how everyday settings can be considered as 'pedagogical spaces' where opportunities for innovation arise and new knowledge about food and cooking can be acquired. Families, schools, travel, workplaces and neighbourhood networks emerged as sites where traditional food knowledge can be shared and new skills developed. The paper contributes to our understanding of food pedagogies by highlighting the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation in everyday, mundane encounters and exchanges in multicultural societies.

Introduction

This paper explores the way learning to cook remains important for the maintenance of 'ethnic' food traditions and how sharing food knowledge plays a role in intercultural exchanges. Ethnographic data from an ongoing study in Melbourne is presented to highlight how, in everyday practices, both tradition and innovation are involved in learning experiences related to cooking. The empirical work described here took place during 2010-2011 in a study designed to investigate the resilience of ethnic food cultures in the face of increasing industrialisation in global food systems. In this paper I focus, in particular, on the interplay between tradition and innovation in everyday settings by drawing closely on three women's accounts of cooking and learning.

Many observers believe traditional cooking skills are receding because modern, industrialized food systems offer consumers more opportunities to eat pre-prepared meals. However, notions of tradition and innovation used in discussions of cooking practices are problematic because they have not been carefully defined (Short 2006: 113). In both scholarly and popular discourse on cooking, terms such as 'traditional' are loosely defined but generally used to mean

natural, unprocessed and ‘authentic’ products and ‘cooking from scratch’. Innovation in cooking also can, and is, defined in various ways. One way it can be defined is to indicate practices associated with processed food products and shortcuts (Ritzer 2008); another is to indicate new ‘foodie’ trends (Laudan 2001). But for the purpose of this paper, I will define innovation as the practice of changing one’s ‘traditional’ foods as one draws on new knowledges and skills from others.

The lack of definition has led to imprecise notions of what constitute actual cooking skills and how they are learned. For instance, Frances Short asks why frying a piece of fresh fish is considered to be ‘proper cooking’, when heating a ready-made fish meal in a microwave – a practice that might require as much physical dexterity as frying fresh fish – is not seen in the same way? (2006: 99). According to Short, this suggests that in continuing debates about the perceived decline in cooking capabilities (Lang & Caraher 2001; Murcott 1997), knowing how to cook is often portrayed solely as a set of technical skills. Short argues this is insufficient for explaining how food knowledge and skills are acquired and reproduced. She recommends that attention be shifted to the person performing or learning the tasks involved in cooking. A ‘person-centred’ focus, rather than concentrating on technical abilities, enables us to take into account the attitudes, beliefs and daily lived experience of the person doing the cooking (Short 2006: 98). For this paper, using such an approach provides a way of understanding how broader social and cultural processes have a bearing on learning to cook as the following review of the literature illustrates.

Food: learning and tradition

There is a significant body of work on food exploring notions of continuity and change in class, gender, identity and consumption, but there is little discussion in this literature on learning to cook

(notable exceptions include Duruz 2005; Short 2006; Sutton 2001). Furthermore, there is emergent literature on how food in everyday intercultural interactions provides opportunities for learning (Wise 2011; Noble 2009; Flowers & Swan 2012). This brief survey of the literature will suggest how questioning the interplay between tradition and innovation in contemporary multicultural societies is helpful for revealing the processes involved in learning to cook as well as for understanding how people learn about other cultures through their foodways.

Alan Warde (1997) points out that many concerns about food in contemporary societies are laments for the perceived passing of traditional cooking practices (see also Lang & Caraher 2001). These concerns are in line with the claims in George Ritzer's *McDonaldization* thesis that eating cultures are increasingly dominated by standardization and homogeneity (2008).

At the same time, however, a substantial body of work stresses the resilience of ethnic cuisines in the modern world. For instance, maintaining traditional cooking and eating practices is seen as fundamental to processes of multicultural home-building and creating a sense of belonging in a new setting for those in migrant communities (Hage 1997). Traditional ethnic food practices are closely linked to the symbolic significance of shared cultural values (Kwik 2008), as markers of ethnic identity (Beoku-Betts 1995), and for providing cultural strategies for negotiating generational differences (Vallianatos & Raine 2008). While such works are useful for framing multicultural experiences, they frequently leave aside the question of how cooking skills and practices are actually acquired. One scholar who does focus on this question is David Sutton.

In his treatment of food and memory, David Sutton focuses on food traditions being taught through processes of 'embodied apprenticeship'. In these processes, culinary knowledge and skills are transmitted and received through *taking part* in the physical

performance of 'doing/learning cooking' (2001: 126). Because much of the practical knowledge required for accumulating cooking skills involves sedimentation of sensory imagery into memories, watching and copying are the primary way this kind of learning is achieved. These are largely informal, mimetic processes where cultural taste preferences and memories become embedded by observing, listening, smelling and tasting. A bank of cognitive, sensory and physical skills develop together to build a 'stock of knowledge' upon which to draw in future practice.

A stock of knowledge involves more than simply knowing the manual tasks necessary for preparing food. Short argues that 'perceptual, conceptual, emotional and logistical' skills are all brought into play when people cook. This is 'tacit' knowledge necessary for the organization and multi-tasking involved in routine meal provision (2006: 61). Sutton (2001) emphasises that most of this knowledge is absorbed casually and often without formal 'lessons': the body **learns through habituated practice in a way that cannot be set down** in more formal situations such as following written instructions in recipe books. It is, as Short suggests, 'inadvertently gathered know-how' (2006: 52). Sensory cues such as smell and taste are particularly important for indicating when food is correctly prepared according to custom and the cultural tastes of those who will be eating it (Choo 2004).

As many observers point out, the assumption that domestic foodwork is primarily the responsibility of women is found in most societies (Beagan et. al 2008; Beoku-Betts 1995; Lupton 1996). Embodied apprenticeship is shaped by the gendered division of domestic labour and is illustrated by the fact that it is frequently an older female relative who is demonstrating how a dish should be prepared and a younger female who is expected to absorb the knowledge imparted by taking part in the process with her (Sutton 2001: 134).

Another salient feature in how traditional food practices are learned is repetition. Gestures and practices used for preparing food are repeated as is the seasonal rotation of dishes associated with traditional cuisines. Warde claims familiarity engendered by repeated practice is indicative of the way certain dishes or entire cuisines come to be regarded as traditional (1997: 64). For food to be judged as belonging to a tradition it must be thought of as long-lived and authentic. In Warde's definition these become moral and aesthetic values.

There is, however, a danger of romanticising notions of tradition (Laudan 2001). Jean Duruz notes that regrets about supposedly 'lost' traditions are often voiced as discourses of 'nostalgic return' to a past where it is imagined the food was better than that of the present day (Duru 1999). As these writers note, the problem with such accounts is they ignore the difficulties of daily life such as the labour-intensive practices involved in 'traditional' meal provision. Who today, Short asks (2006: 101), really wants to pluck their own chickens or mill their own grain? Indeed, it has been suggested that calls for the resurrection of traditional cooking practices might disguise a socially conservative argument that women 'belong' in the kitchen and are to blame if negative outcomes arise when traditional practices fall into disuse (Lang & Caraher 2001: 11).

This raises interesting questions about the continuation of traditional food practices and learning to cook in modern societies. While people find the idea of longevity in a cuisine an appealing one (Warde 1997: 66), there is widespread agreement in the literature that traditions are not fixed and immutable. Sutton argues that even the most entrenched customs associated with traditional cooking can be disrupted by circumstance and therefore the stock of knowledge must allow for adaptation (Sutton 2001: 129). Warde found that a certain amount of improvisation is necessary for a practice to be successfully

sustained over time because other factors intrude especially the amount of time and money available for cooking (1997: 129).

In sum then, the literature on food and tradition tells us that people remain attached to distinct styles of cooking and transmission of food knowledge because they regard them as providing comfort and a sense of belonging in relation to collective cooking and eating practices. There are equally appealing attractions to be found through learning about other cuisines and customs and in the next section one way this occurs is explored.

Food: learning and everyday multiculturalism

Everyday multiculturalism perspectives are particularly useful for exploring ideas about food and learning in contemporary Australia because, as Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham point out, an approach that takes 'the lived experience of diversity' as its central focus is able to show how 'social actors experience and negotiate cultural difference on the ground' (Wise & Velayutham 2009: 3). Everyday multiculturalism emphasizes 'ordinary' encounters with difference and diversity; 'micro-moments' that occur in mundane situations such as workplaces, neighbourhoods or schoolyards (Noble 2009). For the purposes of this paper, when these encounters involve interactions around food they become important for considering how possibilities for learning and innovation arise.

The attention to 'on the ground' experience does not, however, mean that broader structural processes are ignored or discounted (Wise & Velayutham 2009). This is important when investigating food practices because complex factors including access to economic resources, age-differentiated nutritional requirements, powerful marketing messages and increasingly individualized taste preferences inevitably impinge on both learning and sustaining cooking practices (Bell & Hollows 2007).

One such factor is the migratory flows characterizing the current phase of globalization which, it has been suggested, have helped broaden food choices available for consumers in modern cities (James 2005; Wise 2011). As migrant communities establish food businesses to cater for the tastes and traditions of their own members, the wider population is also offered opportunities to try food from other cultures. Donna Gabaccia (1998) points out that mainstream businesses then begin to offer different food ranges and are quick to commodify ‘exotic’ produce as consumers become more familiar with ‘new’ dishes and different ways of preparing food. Ahmad Jamal (1996) argues that the appearance of ‘ethnic’ products in mainstream supermarkets helps those in the majority culture to adopt products from other cultures into their cooking. In a recent view of the complex relationships in multicultural societies, Greg Noble explores the way ‘being together’ is regularly negotiated in practical terms, including via reciprocal transactions around food (Noble 2009). He suggests that ‘strangeness’ **disappears through habitual contact as people are brought together** in ordinary situations such as sporting clubs, schools and community groups (ibid: 61).

While Warde says curiosity about ‘foreign food’ is a feature of modern life (1997: 59), Ben Highmore warns that, although attraction to the food of another culture can be seen as a form of learning it does not necessarily equate to a positive attitude towards multiculturalism more generally (2008: 292). Furthermore, Gill Valentine points out that some types of daily interactions between people from different groups are not really ‘multicultural encounters’ at all (2008: 326) and are often cross-cut by uneven power relations of class, gender and age. In this regard, Ghassan Hage has criticized using food as an indicator of multicultural interaction as being superficial and even exploitative (Hage 1997). Hage argues that the experience of dining out in ethnic restaurants is more often practised to enhance the cultural capital of the (mostly white and middle class) diners than establishing any real interconnections between migrants and the mainstream

(1997). For him, the relationship is a distant and distancing one; it is 'multiculturalism without migrants' in which extant power hierarchies **in the relationships between the centre and periphery are left undisturbed** (Hage 1997).

And yet, Uma Narayan (1997) argues, an appreciation for the food of others might be a first step towards deeper recognition: 'gustatory relish for the food of 'Others' may help contribute to an appreciation of their presence in the national community, despite ignorance about the cultural contexts of their foods – these pleasures of the palate providing more powerful bonds than knowledge' (cited in Highmore 2008: 391). I want to highlight this point because, as Noble argues, it is the multidirectional nature of intercultural exchange that is the most significant characteristic of the evolving 'diversification of diversity' in Australia today. He shows that while 'many long-time Australians take up the diverse cultural goods made available by cultural diversity, so too migrants and their children take up elements of the prevailing Australian ways of life *and* maintain the diverse traditions and practices they have brought with them, *and* create new traditions and associations' (Noble 2009: 48, original italics). In this sense, intercultural exchanges can play an important role for exploring the dynamics of tradition and innovation within everyday food pedagogies.

What follows illustrates how sharing food with someone from another **cultural tradition can be an introduction to learning about the dense** layers of meaning associated with the food of that culture (Morgan et al. 2005). This rarely occurs in a vacuum. Intercultural sharing of food has the capacity to transform interactions between people 'where identities are not left behind, but can be shifted and opened up in moments of non-hierarchical reciprocity, and are sometimes mutually reconfigured in the process' (Wise 2009: 23). Shopping, cooking and swapping recipes are ideal, 'unthreatening' ways that intercultural food exchanges intermesh in daily practice (Duruz 2005) and create meaningful connections between people (Wise 2011).

The interplay between traditional and innovative food pedagogies

The empirical study described here took place during 2010-2011 and was designed to investigate the resilience of ethnic food cultures in the face of increasing industrialisation in global food systems. Participants were recruited in local shops and markets in an inner suburb of Melbourne. The area has a multicultural 'feel' and provides an ideal space for exploring the ways people are 'doing togetherness' (Valentine 2008). In-depth interviews were conducted in 32 households and raised a number of issues covered in the literature discussed above. The participants were asked to describe how they learned to cook, who had taught them and what factors most influenced their ongoing practices. In addition, they were invited to discuss how they adapted new ideas and practices into their daily routines.

This section draws on three of the participants, Nadia, Anita and Simone, and is structured around their responses. I am singling these three out because they exemplify the two significant themes common to all the participant's responses about learning to cook. Firstly, learning to cook was described as the result of informal, habituated processes and was principally absorbed through observation of an older relative, usually a woman, preparing food in the home. This was the case even amongst those participants, particularly male, who had not been encouraged to cook from a young age. All of the participants remembered watching meals prepared and were able to reproduce the practices when necessary. The second broad theme was the on-going accumulation of cooking knowledge and skills influenced by multicultural diversity. While their own cultural tastes and traditions remained important, the participants also described everyday interconnections and exchanges with people in which they were offered opportunities to learn new ways to prepare food. Most often, these occurred in workplaces, neighbourhood and friendship networks or through intermarriage. What follows shows

how the women's cooking regimes incorporated both traditional and innovative practices which lends weight to arguments from the literature that learning to cook is a multifaceted process (Short 2006).

Nadia:

Nadia, who identifies strongly as Italian-Australian, is a forty-one year old, full-time mother with three pre-teen children. Nadia came to Australia as a child, as did her Macedonian partner who runs a small second-hand furniture business. Their garden has well-established fruit trees and several sizeable vegetable beds but the kitchen is clearly the centre of most household activities. Well-used pots and pans are stacked near a large oven, the children's homework and newspapers are spread out on the table and a range of cooking equipment, old and new, occupies the benches. There are no cookery books in the kitchen and when this is mentioned, Nadia shrugs and responds that she doesn't need them. 'I come from Italy, so I eat lots of pasta', she offers, by way of explanation. Nadia begins her interview by saying:

In the Italian families, everybody cooks! From day one, everybody cooks... you are with your mum and you cook with her. It's what you do.

She goes on to describe her children making gnocchi with her mother:

Of course, it's their favourite 'cos they love making them. ... So they go to the shops, they buy the ingredients, they bring 'em back. Mum boils the potatoes, she does the semolina, she does the mashing potatoes; you know it's the whole process. And they get the sieve and they make the [gnocchi] and they cook 'em and they make the sauce and stuff. It's the whole day. Not a whole day, but at least three or four hours of an activity. But that's just what they do; especially grandmothers. It's just what they do.

Nadia's description of intergenerational transmission of food knowledge and skills is akin to Sutton's account of embodied

apprenticeship (Sutton 2001: 134). Her elaboration of her mother's gnocchi-making 'lessons' with the children shows how closely **the process of learning to cook is connected to both gendered** assumptions underpinning domestic food work and practical skills acquisition. In this account, the labour-intensity of traditional cuisines and the assumption that responsibility for it falls to women appear seamlessly intertwined as 'just what they do'. However, what Nadia has articulated here is the way, in some women's experience, taken-for-granted expectations about cooking practices come to be positively inflected as enjoyable tasks. Nadia made it clear that she enjoys the culinary work she performs for her family and friends, and describes herself as 'a bit of a crowd-pleaser':

Some people feel it's a chore, I think... But for me it's an extension of me, of my kind of caring and sharing. So if you love someone, you can share what you've got.

Nadia's comments are typical of all the women from the broader study who did most of the cooking in their households. Rather than seeing this as 'false consciousness' or a rationale employed to disguise an unequal, unfair division of domestic labour, a view of kitchens as spaces for celebrations of feminine innovation and power brings **with it the possibility that in spite of the continued lack of recognition** of the 'workful' nature of routine domestic cooking tasks (De Vault 1997:183), many women regard cooking as an avenue for creative expressions of identity. In this view, learning to cook and acquiring new cooking skills is a form of 'positive feminine subjectivity' (Lupton 2000: 185). The current popularity of food shows on television may have raised the status of cooking and enabled women to claim the kitchen as a creative space over and above the obligation to provide family meals (Hollows 2003).

However, earlier incidents in Nadia's culinary education were not all positive. She was regularly teased at school for the type of lunches her mother provided; a former boyfriend refused to eat at her house

claiming he didn't think it was 'safe' to eat homemade salami; she has repeatedly tried to convince her neighbours that her children, unlike their own, are fond of garlic and herbs in their food. These are common experiences raised in discussions of multiculturalism and illustrate the everyday racism experienced by many migrants when their food is rejected (Highmore 2008; Valentine 2008).

Nadia also described how her cooking changed through marriage and travel. She has extended her culinary repertoire as she caters for her partner's food preferences which are different from her own and as she tries to recreate the meals she tasted while overseas. While discussing these influences, Nadia acknowledged that the opportunities she had for learning other cuisines was not something that had been available for her mother:

I don't think I'm that traditional as my mother... But mum never really worked, like out of the house so she really kept her ways... In my mum's house, we only eat Italian... But I think 'cos I also cook like [partner's] family. Also, I do cook Asian meals. And also sometimes the Greek comes in there too because you're here and there are Greeks everywhere, you know.

Nadia has seen Australian cooking and eating cultures change throughout her lifetime:

Like, when you go to someone else's house these days it's not like it used to be... They will bring out the ciabatta, they will bring out the sundried tomatoes, you know? I feel that Italian food has become part of Melbourne food. It's like everyone has *caffè latte* and everybody has *focaccia* and everyone eats pasta. Yeah, I think Italian culture has amalgamated into Melbourne.

The 'amalgamated' cultural exchange Nadia describes here is reminiscent of Noble's thesis of the multidirectional interactions between migrants and the mainstream (2009: 48) *and of the importance* Hage attributes to home-building practices (1997). The appearance of food products associated with Italian cuisine such

as sun-dried tomatoes on the shelves of Australia supermarkets indicates they have become popular with a broad cross-section of the population. At the same time Nadia expresses pride in the fact that her traditions have been readily adopted into Australian foodways. This is one way food traditions, albeit in commodified form in this example, can be taken up by others and adopted as innovative ways of exploring other cuisines.

Anita

The second interviewee, Anita, is a single, twenty-six year old language teacher. Her parents migrated from Italy in the sixties and worked at the Ford factory until their retirement when they bought a house with a garden large enough to sustain the family. The kitchen in Anita's flat is crammed with preserves and produce from her father's garden and she grows a surprising number of vegetables and herbs in her own tiny courtyard. Anita was born in Australia but regularly travels to Italy to stay with aunts and cousins and to continue her language studies. She describes her food traditions as 'Sicilian', being careful to make sure that it is understood as regionally distinct, not the more general 'Italian'. When asked who had taught her to cook, her reply is a pithy summation of the partly unconscious acquisition of food knowledge referred to by Short as 'inadvertently gathered know-how' (2006: 52): *'I don't know, you grow up and it just happens!'*

For Anita, learning to cook was intricately bound up with repetition and habit (Lupton 1996; Warde 1997). The following extract shows how this cements traditional dispositions of taste:

I grew up having pasta con salsa, that's Sicilian. It's just pasta and sauce, passata. Every night! That's like five nights a week. Saturday we would have our homemade pizza, once again with all the homemade ingredients. And then Sunday we would have some leftovers. That was it; that was like the staple diet.

In Anita's reflection on her mother's cooking, the importance of preserving Sicilian recipes was a prominent concern. Her feelings of custodianship towards the recipes and cooking practices she had observed as a child were expressed in terms of an anxiety they would disappear if they fell into disuse. It is notable that Anita mentions only females as having any responsibility in this regard despite the fact that her brother and father also cook on occasion:

And now I'm thinking I've gotta start taking responsibility! My nonna died last year... and then there's my mum and me and my sister and I've got a niece and everything but if we don't make an effort to learn these things then they won't exist 'cos they are not written down.

A 'pedagogy of preservation' is apparent here. This is evident when Anita claims that 'going by feel' is appropriate for cultural insiders whereas learning from books opens up the tradition for outsiders.

I approach risotto in the same way as I guess Anglo folks would. Like, I'm using a recipe book rather than going by feel whereas if I'm making a pizza or if I'm making pasta, why would I look at a recipe book? I'll try different risottos like everyone else.

Anita assumes 'everyone' will want to try to find new ways of cooking because '*Anglo cuisine doesn't have too much of an evocative hold on us*'. The 'acculturation of the mainstream' to diverse food cultures also starts to change how ethnic food is perceived; many foods and cooking styles lose the label 'exotic' and become part of a widely shared and familiar set of meanings (Jamal 1996: 21). This was alluded to in Nadia's observations about Italian food becoming 'amalgamated' into Australian culinary landscapes and here, it is seen in Anita's view that mainstream Australian cooking habits continue to benefit through cross-cultural exchange of recipes and ingredients.

Her workplace is one site where this occurs. Anita offers her co-workers simple Sicilian recipes and brings arancini for them to try; they reciprocate by teaching her something of their cuisine in return:

At work [there are] a lot of Anglo-Aussie women and they have taken me under their wing and they find it amusing that I won't know about these Aussie traditions. Oh my god, they taught me to make... it was golden syrup dumplings! And I'm like, 'what?' Yeah, but they take great delight in sharing these things.

In exchanges of this kind, the pedagogical encounter moves from the domestic sphere to a broader, work-place setting where sharing is the key feature. Learning about food from another culture is not simply the acquisition of a recipe; it opens up opportunities to learn about the broader circumstances surrounding cuisines. Such exchanges do more than inform. They bring people together in ordinary and everyday instances of 'people-mixing' that can lead to establishment of ongoing relationships through cooking together (Noble 2009: 62).

Simone

Now I turn to an older woman from a different heritage and generation. Simone, seventy, is an outgoing woman of Anglo-Irish descent who lives alone in the small semi-detached cottage she bought once her five children had moved away. Simone relates a cooking repertoire based on the frugality of a working class upbringing and her struggle to raise her children alone on a meagre wage. During her interview, Simone describes the food of her childhood as 'the classic English diet of meat and three veg' and notes that this only started to change when she became active in political movements in the sixties and seventies and started to mix with 'bohemian people'. Simone gave an account of embodied learning:

I suppose I learnt the basics of cooking from just being there and watching and helping and cutting up ... And I think one of the difficult parts of cooking and why it is important to watch people is that a lot of it is about how the stuff looks at certain stages of preparation. So you know by looking at it that you have mixed it enough, or that you've kneaded it enough or that it's cooked enough. So that visual thing, that's really quite important... and

the cookery books can't really tell you that. Even the photographs don't kind of work.

In the following extract, Simone recounts the effort of recreating a marmalade that tasted like the one her mother made. This is a task she now describes as 'a perpetual chore' made necessary by the fact that she cannot find a commercial product as much to her liking as the one she remembers. Eschewing convenience in favour of flavour and without a written recipe to guide her, reproducing the taste involves visualizing how her mother had done it. Importantly here is that she was not consciously aware that she remembered how to do it.

I think it's like osmosis. With the marmalade, I didn't realize that I knew how to make it until I really sat down and thought 'Now this [bought product] is not the marmalade that I want. What did she do?' And then I kind of summoned it up... this is the way my mother made the marmalade and now that's how I cook marmalade. The unwritten recipe – and that's that thing about seeing something – you know when you look at the fruit that it's been boiled enough.

While visualization may be sufficient for reproducing oft-observed traditional practices, the discovery of food from an unfamiliar cuisine can be a prompt for learning to cook in innovative ways. Simone recalls her first experience of dining in a restaurant:

I can remember when I was about eighteen and I was taken out to dinner and I was taken to one of the first licensed Italian restaurants in Melbourne... And I can remember what I had – I had veal scaloppine and I thought, 'hello, how long has this been going on?'

Following this discovery of food from outside the 'classic English diet' of her youth, Simone began experimenting with a wider range of cooking styles. Later, she learnt new recipes largely through talking to neighbours, 'especially old people' and local shopkeepers. This 'network' or 'neighbourhood pedagogy' has two interrelated outcomes: it teaches different ways of cooking and thinking

about food and it builds relationships of respect through creative experimentation (Morgan et al. 2005).

Italian and Greek food was the first different food that I had and I owe my neighbours a lot for that. I can remember discovering olives... And I started, you know, trying things with oil and I remember the revelation of cooking cabbage with a little bit of oil and vinegar and what a difference that made.

Today, Simone's Sri Lankan son-in-law teaches her to cook his favourite dishes and, while doing so, she learns about different customs and manners associated with food and eating. Simone's previous experience of Sri Lankan cuisine has been from restaurants or using pre-prepared commercial products; now she is learning from watching her son-in-law creating dishes at home. There is a reversal of typical roles here: her age and gender suggest that she would be the one 'teaching' the younger male relative to cook but for Simone, learning in this way means she must re-situate herself as she takes part in the food preparation and becomes part of his family life.

I've tried doing a few of the Sri Lankan recipes. For example, there is a beautiful chick pea curry that he makes with all these different spices. Now, when you taste that, you can't imagine even thinking one of those [pre-prepared] bottles is going to give you anything like it.

Here we see how Simone equates tradition with meals made from scratch. She values the way learning to make this food teaches her about traditions, in this case those of her Sri Lankan son-in-law. On the other hand, it also introduces innovation by extending the culinary repertoire she can draw on.

Conclusion

Families, schools, travel, workplaces, neighbourhoods and intermarriage can all be considered as 'pedagogical spaces' where long-lived, culturally distinct culinary skills continue to be practiced

and become sites that provide opportunities for acquiring new knowledge about food and cooking. The relationship between these is a dynamic one. For many people, learning to cook traditional food happens through repeated observation and taking part in daily routines of meal preparation as seen in the accounts of ‘pedagogies of preservation’ given by Nadia, Anita and Simone. At the same time, there are ‘pedagogies of innovation’ taking place. For Nadia, intermarriage and travel were prompts for her to change her cooking habits. In Anita’s case, workplace relationships have been instrumental for showing her different ways of approaching food. And for Simone, dining out, neighbours and in-laws have led her to embrace a wider range of recipes.

These women have not jettisoned their ‘own’ ways of cooking or the traditions they find important. The data presented here suggests that traditional food knowledge and skills are not disappearing in the face of increasing industrialization in food systems as Ritzer has suggested (2008). But the accounts show this is because of effort, learning, and labour to preserve traditions. These traditions, in turn, become the ingredients for innovation as co-workers and friends swap traditional foods in everyday, mundane encounters often missed by popular and academic accounts. . A person-centred approach (Short 2006) as used here has shown that our understanding of food pedagogies could be broadened by paying more attention to pedagogies of preservation and pedagogies of innovation through what Wise calls ‘micro-moments of hopeful encounter’ between people of different ethnicities (2005: 183).

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